LETTER FROM LANSING

State Lawmakers.

AMENDMENTS TO THE TAX LAW.

The General Committee on Taxation Fairsamped with Bills-The Detroit Single Tax Club Has a Bill Before the Legalature—Unexpected Streak of Economy Causes Fear and Trembling in Official Quarters - To Reduce Officials' Pay.

Lansing, Mich., Feb. 23.-In his report to the joint prison boards at their meeting here last week, Warden Van Evera the Marquette prison gave a very amusing account of his first year's experience as a farmer at the prison. Not being a practical farmer himself, the warden placed the garden in the hands a farmer from the southern part of the state, who had been unfortunate enough to be convicted of the crime of setting fire to another man's barn. The convict was an intelligent fellow, and so the warden employed no superintendent of farming that year. His experience was extremely unfortunate. He could not understand why the cabbages did not grow nor why the other garden truck did not prosper, and the most thorough investigation failed to reveal the reason until about the time the farmer was disharged at the expiration of his sentence. Then it was that Warden Van Evera learned that his farmer convict entertained the idea that the state was perpetrating some sort of an injustice upon him, and in order to square the account to the satisfaction of his conscience he had pinched the tender cabbage plant just below the surface of the ground, and had pracother tricks known only to the practical farmer. Of course it took all summer to realize the results of this kind of farming and the effect was extremely depressing upon the warden, who frankly admits that farming at the prison that season may justly be put down as

Financial Result Unsatisfactory. The next year panned out a little better, a fairly good crop being harvested. The crop, however, consisted mostly of potatoes, and as they were worth but 10 cents per bushel that fall the financial results, after the practical farmer in charge of the farm was paid, were not all that could be desired. Indeed the produce raised could have been bought that fall from the farmers for about one-half what the prison farmer's salary amounted to. Last year the net results were much better, the average earnings of the convicts employed on the farm being 11 cents per day, but the warden does not think that agriculture at the Marquette prison is either a practicable or desirable outlet for con-

No bill thus far introduced has created more discussion than that of Representative Adams, of Kent, which proposes a most radical reform with reference to real estate offered at sheriff's sale to satisfy a mortgage. It is designed to save the mortgagor from losing his entire property, which may be mortgaged for only a small portion of its value, because of his inability to overbid the mortgagee who, of course, limits his bid to the amount of hiscialm. The measure provides that in all cases of mortgage sales, etc., the circuit court shall appoint three disinterested persons to appraise the property to be sold, and in no instance shall it be sold at less than two-thirds of its appraised value. The objection to this bill is that cannot, it is contended, be thus legis-lated away. It will be readily seen that should his claim not amount to twothirds of the appraised value and should no one see fit to bid that sum for the real estate, he would have no way of collecting the money due him and to which he is legally and morally entitled, Here would be a case of the state wip-Ing out one's possessions with a ven-

Attempt to Pass a Single-Tax Bill. Four attempts have been made to secure the passage of a single tax bill, but none of them has been successful. The first proposition to exempt the products of human labor from taxation was made by Representative Judson Grenell. of Detroit, in 1887, but the bill never left hands of the judiciary committee of the house, although it was argued before that body. Two years later Representative Wettlaufer, bf Detroit, in-troduced a similar bill, the application of which, however, was confined to the city of Detroit. This measure was reported out without recommendation, and in committee of the whole the in-troducer advocated it in a speech which attracted much attention. Four years ago a committee endeavored, without success, to induce the commission which drafted the blanket charter bills to in rporate in them a local option single tax provision. This year a bill drafted by the Detroit single tax club has been introduced by Representative Stoneman. of Wayne, but it is not believed that it

will make much progress.

The general committee on taxation is fairly swamped with bills proposing an amendment to the tax laws. They prothem will never see the outside of the committee room. The state tax statistician truthfully says that whether taxes are high or low depends upon the people themselves. He furthermore says that excessive state tax, yet it is exceedingly small when compared with what the people vote on themselves in the shape of county taxes. He believes in an inheritance tax and salaries tax law, citing numerous instances of state employes who draw comfortable salaries from the public treasury, but who do not pay one cent of taxes. They do not own a dolfar's worth of real estate, and although they share in the benefits of taxation to the extent of their entire income, yet they pay nothing towards

Would Tax the Professions. The tax statistician also calisattention to the fact that 3,000 are annually educated at the university at a cost of \$300,000 to the state, but nothing to bemselves. He would remedy this ry person who graduates in a profession should contribute to the expense of arrying on the educational system of the state. This reference to the university sug-

gests the fact that that institution will ask for appropriations in addition to the one-sixth mill tax, despite the fact that all the farmer organizations of the state have resolved that it should be restrict-News Gathered from Among the ed to the revenue from the latter source. It is asserted, and the assertion is susceptible of easy demonstration, that which is more than self-sustaining, are wholly inadequate. The contemplated special appropriations include money for a new library, so that the present library can be transformed into recitation rooms, etc. An annex to the hospital is also needed, and it is desired, in the interests of economy and greater efficiency, to install an electric lighting plant. These improvements will cost, in the aggregate, about \$100,000. It is extremely doubtful if they will be pro-vided for. The senate might possibly consent to the additional appropriations, but it is not at all probable that the house would do so. The bill making appropriations has been introduced by State Senator Mason. Cuts in the Pay of Employes.

There is great trembling in official quarters over the unexpected streak of economy which the final rush of bills has demonstrated exists in the senate. The particular bill on which the officials and clerks are casting anxious eyes was introduced by State Senator Wagar. It is by far the most sweeping salary-reducing measure ever introduced in the Michigan legislature, beginning with the justices of the supreme court and going clear through the list, taking in every official whose salary is not fixed by the constitution. The bill proposes to cut the salary of the supreme court justices from \$7,000 to \$6,000, and fix that of circuit court judges, judges of the superior court of Grand Rapids and of the recorder's court of Detroit at \$2,500. This would cut the salary of the last named official squarely in two. Instead of fees variously estimated at from \$6,000 to \$10,000 per year, the clerk of the supreme court is to have a salary of \$2,000. The office of deputy commissioner of the state land office is abolished, and the salary of deputies to other elective state officials, except treasurer and superintendent of public intruction, is reduced from \$1,800 to \$1,-500, as is that of the private secretary to the governor. The salary of railroad from \$2,500 to \$2,000, and that of labor and insurance commissioner from \$2,-000 to \$1,500. At present the maximum galary which can be paid the ordinary clerks in the various departments is \$1,000, and most of these employes are paid the limit. The Wagar bill fixes this aximum at \$720, the auditor general being allowed four chiefs of divisions at \$1,000 each. At present these chief clerks in all departments receive either \$1,100 or \$1,200. The number of clerks to be employed in the several departments is materially reduced. Senator Wagar figures that his bill will effect an annual saving in excess of \$50,000.

Pingrees Nominations. Although the senate confirmed the nominations of Colonel Fred H. Case of Three Rivers for inspector general, and A. C. Bird for member of the state board of agriculture, the fight between Covernor Pingree and that body is as intense as ever. If there has been any change in the situation it has been for the worse. The nominations of ex-Gov-ernor Luce for member of the Ionia prison board, and of Rev. L. Morgan Wood of Detroit for member of the state board of correction and charities, are still hung up, and there is no telling when they will be disposed of. It is freely predicted, however, that when that time comes it will be found that

Wood, at least, will not be confirmed. The breach between the governor and the senate widened very perceptably last Friday when Senator Covell introduced a bill designed to defeat a purpose which has been atributed to the governor, and which, it must be confessed, there is some reason for believing he entertained. Since Dec. 31 the terms of a number of members of various state boards have expired, and but few of the vacancies have been filled, The term of Labor Commissioner Morse will expire March I, but thus far no one has been named to succeed him. The theory of the senators is that, because of the treatment which his nominations thus far made have received at their hands, the governor has decided to send in no more until after the final adjournment of the legislature. Then, under the present law, he can name whomsoever he pleases and the until the legislature meets in 1899

Bill by SenatorCovell. In order to prevent this Senator Co-vell has introduced a bill providing that when vacancies occur on state boards or in state offices previous to or during the session of the legislature, nominations to fill such vacancies must be made before the session adjourns. If the governor falls to make such nominations within the prescribed time, then the hold-over officials are to continue in office until the next regular session of the legislature. It is not unlikely that this bill will pass the senate, but the chances are against its going through

Great things are expected of the spe cial committee of three appointed by the house last week to investigate the charges of viciations of the law governing freight rates on the part of railroad companies. Complaints of discrimination have been received from all sections of the state, and for several weeks the farmers' organization of the legislature has been gathering evidence on this point. The special committee has been given power to subpoena witnesses, examine books, etc., and it proposes to go into the subject exhaustively. Inasmuch as a majority of the committee are recognized Pingree men, who are in accord with the governor's railroad programme, it may be expected to tear up the turf to a considerable extent. The vote of 47 to 36 by which the house refused to reconsider the vote by which it was decided to appoint this committee was especially pleasing to Governor Pingree. It showed that within four of a majority of the members of the house were in favor of advancing his project, and enough of his friends were absent when the vote was taken to make up the difference. The situation in the senly predicted that no anti-railroad legislation of any consequence will pass that body. JAMES V. BARRY.

Major McKinley will, at the time of his inauguration, be 54 years of age. Nine presidents entered the White House at an earlier age—Grant at 47, Cleveland at 48, Garfield and Pierce at 40, Polk at 50, Fillmore at 50, Tyler and Arthur at 51, and Lincoln at 52.

RECORD IS BROKEN.

Bills and Resolutions Introduced at Lansing.

PROSPECT OF A LONG SESSION.

Unless a Decided Improvement in Haste Is Made the Legislature May Drag Along Until August - Dudley Beet Sugar Boun ty Bill Passed by the House-Bills Providing for Reduction of Salaries-Petrowski's Liquor Bill.

Lansing, Mich., March 2 .- The present legislature has broken one record and unless the statesmen comprising that body speedily acquire a hustle and work it vigorously they will make an-other, which will not be calculated to please their constituents. The first rec-ord relates to the number of bills introduced, and the prospective one to the length of the session. When the con-stitutional limit of fifty days during which bills could be introduced was reached last week, the files contained a total of 1,839 bills and joint resolutions, an excess of 133 over the number introduced two years ago when the high water mark was reached. Each house smashed the record, the totals for the senate being 540 bills and twenty joint resolutions, and for the house 1,232 bills and forty-seven joint resolutions.

An examination of the files by gentle men who have been connected with the legislature for many years, warrants the statement that if there is any subject not treated or of any reform not provided for in the vast number of bills now awaiting consideration, no one has vet discovered what they are. Every good or cranky notion that ever entered any one's head has found expres-sion in one bill or another.

Session May Last Till August. The unusual number of bills introduced suggests the thought that the legislature has not been making remarkable haste in disposing of its work, and unless a decided improvement is shown in that regard, the session drag along until the 1st of August. The danger of this is all the graver because so many of the bills are in the line of decided innovations and are likely to provoke prolonged discussion. The governor's reform bills alone are sufficlently numerous and important to furnish work for an ordinary session.

A very pleasant feature of the pres ent session is the social side which is being cultivated to a greater extent than ever before. More than the usual number of legislators have their wives or daughters with them and are keeping house. They constitute quite a colon; and are much given to social pleas-Lieutenant Governor Dunstan ures. Lieutenant Governor Dunstan and Speaker Gordon have each entertained at two very enjoyable card parties, and these, in addition to numerous informal gatherings, have served make the winter pass very pleasantly.

The most important measure that has thus far passed either house received a majority vote in the lower house last Friday. This was the Dudley bill providing for the payment of a bounty for beet sugar of Michigan production, mention of which was made in these columns a fortnight ago. The unanimity of the vote in the house augurs well for the fate of the bill in the senate although it is probable that it will meet with greater opposition there.

No Limit to the Aggregate Bounty. The bill came up for final passage in the house late Friday afternoon when but 64 members were present. The vote stood 57 for the bill and 7 against it. As passed it provides for a bounty of I cent a pound, such bounty to be paid for seven years unless the federal government should offer a bounty, in which case Michigan is to cease paying one. There is no limit to the aggregate bounty to be paid in any one year, an amendment to make the limit \$30,000 having been voted down. Some of those who opposed the bill thought that there was danger of the amount becoming so large as to become extremely burdensome, but the friends of the measure cited the experience of Nebraska and California, each of which pays a bounty, as proof that this need not be feared. If the bill passes the senate it will be promptly approved, Governor Pingree having long since declared himself to be in favor of it. Homeopathic Department of University.

Although a bill to coerce the regents of the university into removing the homeopathic department of that institution to Detroit has been introduced in the senate, it is not unlikely that it will not be pushed to a vote. The bill was introduced at the request of the legislative council of the State Homeo pathic Medical society, and it provides that the one-sixth mill tax for the support of the university shall not be available unless the removal is made. Some such coercive measure was necessary in view of the fact that the suprame court has declared that the law ordering re moval, which was passed two years ago cannot be enforced, the regents being a constitutional body whose discretion in conducting the affairs of the university cannot be supplanted by the discretion of the legislature or any other The council had the bill introduced on the understanding that 90 per cent. of the members of the home pathic profession in the state favored removal. A few days ago, however Professor Copeland of the homeopathic department, met the members of the council here and asserted that fully 78 per cent. of the profession were in fa-At his suggestion the council decided to make another canvass of the profession before deciding whether to push the bill to a vote. If Professor Copeland's claim is sustained the bill will be permitted to die in the committee.

Reduction of Salaries. A number of bills on the files of each house provides for reducing the salaries of public officials, most all classes of public servants being included in their provisions. It is a noteworthy fact, lowever, that every reference to the salary of the attorney general is made with a purpose of increasing it, and both houses have very wisely voted to submit to the people at the election in April a proposition to amend the constitution so as to increase the salary of the attorney general from \$800 to \$3,500 per year, with the further proreside in Lansing during his term of office. The fact that there was but one vote recorded against the submission of this proposition shows that those who have looked into the matter are con-

a large sum of money by increasing the salary. The fact of the matter is that the attorney general cannot af-ford to abandon his practice entirely and take up his residence in Lansing and devote his entire time to the duties of his office for an annual stipend of 00. Furthermore, no one expects him to do so. The result is he is compelled in order that he may earn in private ractice sufficient to support his family, to employ assistant counsel in many cases at the expense of the state. This counsel comes high, and the annual amount thus paid out amounts to several times more than the proposed in-crease. If the taxpayers of the state know when they are presented with an opportunity to do a good piece of busi-ness for themselves they will see to it that this proposition is ratified at the

In the Interest of Good Butter. A bill which has been defeated at several previous sessions of the legislature, although its passage was asked for by all the farmers of the state, bids fair to become a law this year, it having already passed the senate by a decisive vote, notwithstanding the fact that the upper house has been the rock upon which this class of bills has heretofore split. The bill in question prohibits the coloring of butter substitutes so as to make them resemble genuine butter. It is, of course, opposed by the manufact-urers of oleomargarine, who were successful in killing it two years ago, although there was not a pound of oleo-margarine manufactured in Michigan. The oleomargarine lobby, has, however, thus far signally failed this year, and with the great number of farmers in the house it is altogether probable that the action of the senate will be there concurred in. An effort was made in the senate to amend the bill to prohibit the coloring of inferior butter so as to resemble the better article, but only five votes were recorded in its favor. The farmers and creamery proprietors assert that the passage of this bill will materially increase the price of genuine butter in Michigan-a consummation the farmers have long been wishing for.

State Board of Health. A bill was introduced in the upper house last week similar to the one defeated two years ago, which provides for the reconstruction of the board of health. The board is one of the most valuable institutions supported by the state, and it would be a calamity if it were either abolished or its functions curtailed. Its members are citizens who have made special study along lines with which the board has to deal, and they give a vast amount of their time to the duties without charge.

The pending bill provides for the repeal of the law of 1873 establishing the present board and substitutes therefor a state board of health commissioners, to be appointed by the governor within thirty days after the passage of the act, and to consist of seven persons, six of whom shall be physicians of at least five years' practice, and one of whom is to reside in the upper peninsula. A secretary at \$2,000 and four clerks at from \$800 to \$1,200 per year are provided. Outside these salaries the annual appropriation for the support of the board is limited to \$2,000.

As an entirely disinterested citizen, save only so far as the best interests of the state are concerned, and as one who has closely watched the work of the board and its results for the past decade, I venture the assertion that if the legislators consult their constituents' welfare they will kill this bill. The entire health board system might bet-ter be abolished and the whole amount it costs saved, for the bill provides a system which would be able to accomplish nothing of a practical nature. Further than this the legislature should not molest so important a department.

Regulation of Liquor Traffic. Representative Belknap has some very radical ideas with reference to the regulation of the liquor traffic, and he has embodied these ideas in a bill. This measure provides that in incorporated villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants the license fee shall be \$600; in cities of more than 1,000 inhabitants, \$700; and in places of more than 10,000 inhabitants, \$900. The fee for selling liquor at wholeeals is fixed at \$1,000 and for both wholesaling and retailing, \$1,200. It takes from city and village councils and township boards the right to permit saleons to be kept open later than 9 o'clock at night, and provides that they shall be closed promptly at that

A liquor bill which was introduced by Representative Petrowski, who conducts a saloon in Detroit, provides that al! druggists shall take out a retail liguor license. Mr. Petrowski maintains that many druggists sell more spiritucus liquor as a beverage than the salcon keepers do, and he believes that they should be required to pay for the privilege. A third liquor-bill increases the uniform tax to \$750, and still another permits boards of supervisors, by a majority vote, to suspend the operation of the general liquor law in their respective counties so that local option may prevail, and provides for the holding of an election every two years on the local option proposition.

Discrimination in Freight Rates.

The committee appointed to make an investigation into the charges of discrimination in the matter of freight rates has selected John N. Foster of Ludington, clerk, and is already at work. The investigation will be ex-haustive and will occupy the full thirty days alloted the committee by the house. It has been discovered that the special charter of the Michigan Central road provides that which gives that company the privilege of fixing its freight rates as high as those of certain New England roads, but no bigher, and further provides that such rates shall be determined by a committee consisting of the secretary of state, auditor general and attorney general, either individually or collectively. Not with-standing this provision the officials named have never in the history of the state, so far as can be ascertained, taken any action in regard to these rates, and the present officials had no knowledge that this was a part of their duties. It is doubtful if any of their predecessors did, the requirement being buried up in the voluminous charter of the company. The latter has always been permitted to fix its rates unmolested by any state authority. many shippers who have or think they have grievances against the railway companies will be summoned to appear before the committee, and the companies will also be heard in their own be-

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